

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 8, 2017

The Honorable John F. Kelly
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Kelly:

We write as Democratic Members of Congress to express our deep concerns and opposition to an immigration enforcement proposal you discussed in a recent media interview where you outlined a plan to separate families and put children into the U.S. foster care system.

Specifically, in an interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer on Monday, you stated that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is considering separating immigrant children from their parents as a way to deter immigrants from unlawful entry into the United States. Blitzer pointedly asked you: "If you get some young kids who manage to sneak into the United States with their parents, are Department of Homeland Security personnel going to separate the children from their moms and dads?" You replied: "Yes, I am considering, in order to deter more movement along this terribly dangerous network, I am considering exactly that." You then went on to say that the Department would "turn them over to HHS, and they do a very, very good job of either putting them in kind of foster care or linking them up with parents or family members in the United States."

As Members of Congress dedicated to working to improve the state of child welfare in America, this raises, not only serious ethical and humanitarian questions, but also concerns about overwhelming an already overburdened, underfunded and struggling system. In addition, it is seriously troubling that parents could be prosecuted for human trafficking if they facilitate the unlawful entry of their minor children into the United States, as outlined in the recent DHS enforcement memorandum.

The utilization of unsound policy that calls for the separation of parents and children when they are detained as a deterrent to illegal immigration unwittingly conveys the department's clear lack of understanding of the child welfare system. The entire purpose of the child welfare system, specifically the use of foster care, is to *protect* children from abuse and neglect – not as a tool for punishing or criminalizing parents. Moreover, history plainly demonstrates that DHS is ill-equipped to care for children, let alone the special needs of vulnerable immigrant children.

We ask that you reconsider the implementation of this harmful immigration policy which will only serve to further traumatize families, overwhelm our child welfare system and roll back years of humanitarian progress. We also ask that you avoid pursuing an immigration policy intended to punish parents and criminalize vulnerable families seeking refuge in the United States. Our nation's principles of humanity rooted in the preservation and protection of family units demands no less.

Sincerely,

Members of Congress

Attached Signatories of 80 Members of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

David Scott
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

James E. Clyburn
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Brenda Lawrence
Member of Congress

Andre Carson
Member of Congress

Cedric Richmond
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Norma Torres
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Robin Kelly
Member of Congress

Hank Johnson
Member of Congress

Gregory Meeks
Member of Congress

Sanford Bishop
Member of Congress

Bennie Thompson
Member of Congress

Donald A. McEachin
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Danny Davis
Member of Congress

Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Colleen Hanabusa
Member of Congress

Terri Sewell
Member of Congress

Ted Lieu
Member of Congress

Cory A. Booker
U.S. Senator

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Katherine Clark
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Alcee Hastings
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Dan Kildee
Member of Congress

John Lewis
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Sean Patrick Maloney
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Jerry McNerney
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Jerrold Nadler
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Frank Pallone, Jr.
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John Conyers, Jr.
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Joseph Crowley
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Elijah Cummings
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John K. Delaney
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Val Butler Demings
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Keith Ellison
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Beto O'Rourke
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Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Karissa

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Joyce Beatty

Hank Johnson

Rddie Bernice Johnson

~~Helen Starnes~~

Barbara

Samuel B. King

~~Janet Scott~~

Ben Wilson

M. V. TX33

A. J. MCELVAH

James E. Clyburn

Al Green

Ortiz

Diput

Samuel W. Adams

Shirley Jackson Lee

Brenda Lawrence

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LA-02

Yvette D. Clarke NY-09

Annex CA-35

Chuck ME-1

Michelle [Signature] OR-01

[Signature] WA-07

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Danny [Signature]


Fredrick Wilson FL-24

[Signature] WI-04


[Signature] IL-01

[Signature] AL-7


Ted N. 2-




Cory A. Booker
U.S. Senator



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress




Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress



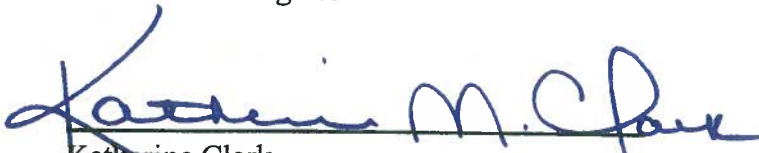
Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress




Judy Chu
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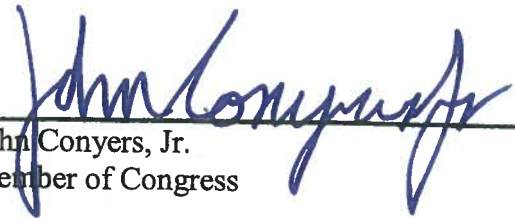
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Katherine Clark
Member of Congress



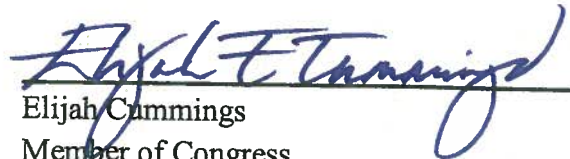
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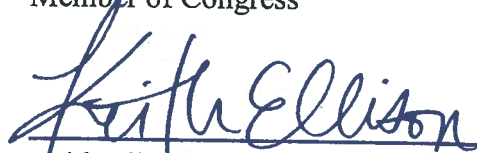
Elijah Cummings
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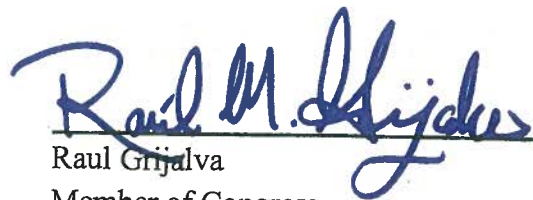
Val Butler Demings
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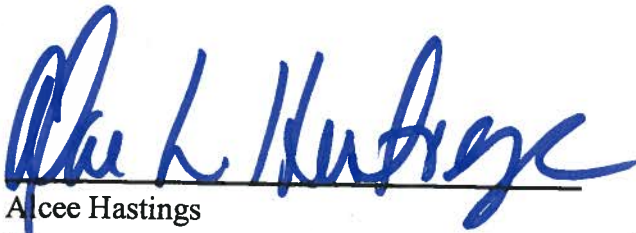
Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



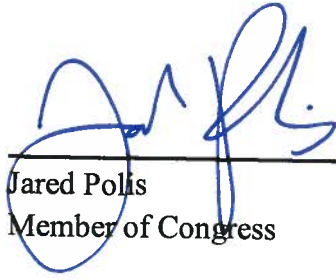
Adriano Espaillat
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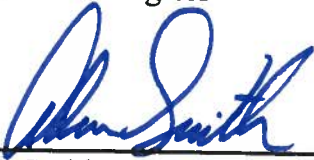
Raul Grijalva
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Alice Hastings
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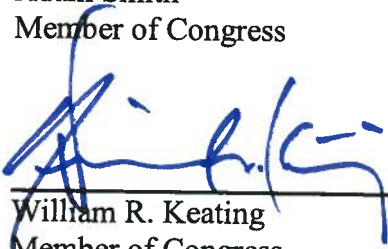
Jared Polis
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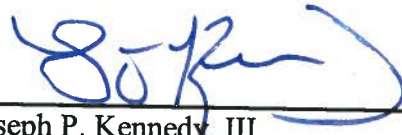
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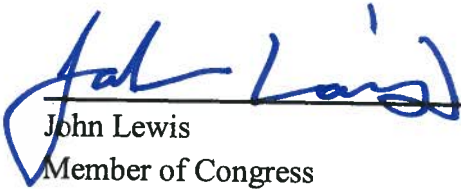
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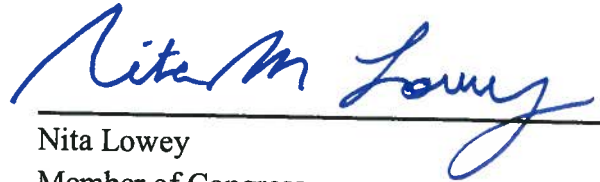
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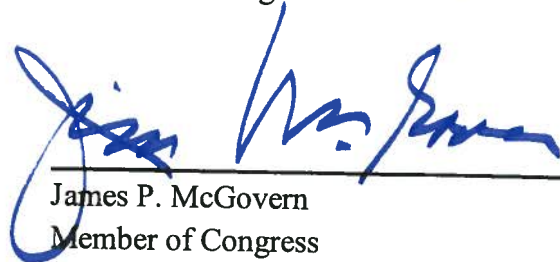
John Lewis
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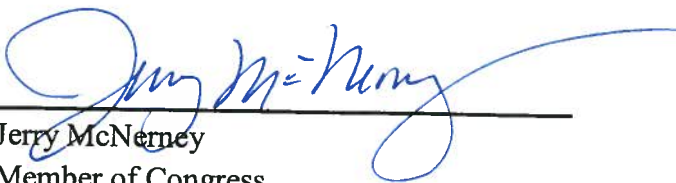
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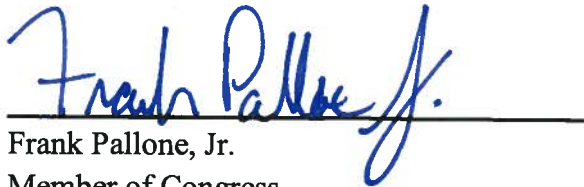
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

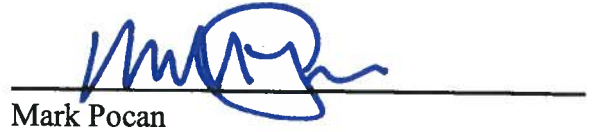



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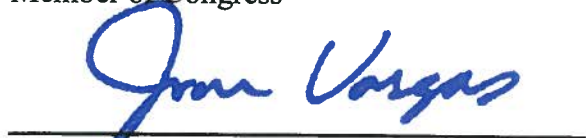

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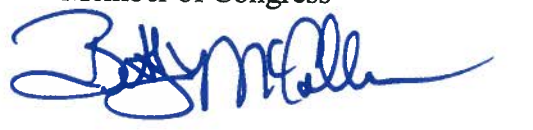

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